12/14

Dear Harold & Lil,

I hope this holiday season finds you both doing well. I've thought about you many times during the past year, particularly after hearing of Harolds surgery last year. I certainly hope that this Christmas is a healthier, happier one than last Christmas.

Things are pretty much the same around here, although this has been a very busy and, at times, a crazy year. I'm still working at the State hospital and still dissatisfied with the job. However, I only have a few months to go until I have 10 years in with the State & my pension vests. So, unless someone makes me an offer I just cant refuse, I'm going to stick around here until May. Then I'll do some serious job hunting. At least this has given me some good

experience to build on.

Since I had only taken a brief vacation last year, I decided to take a nice long one this summer. When I mentioned going back to Colorado, both my parents wanted to go, so we planned a "family" vacation. However, my dad wouldn't fly, which meant several days on the road out & back. Both my mother & I had doubts about that from the start, since my dad is not a good traveler. He thinks a 2 hour drive is a long trip. We tried explaining to him that we'd be on the road probably 8 hrs a day, but that didn't discourage him. So, we made plans for a 3 week trip, giving us time to spend a week in Aspen & a week in Rocky Mountain National Park. We scheduled the trip to get us to Aspen in time for the annual Snowmass Hot Air Balloon Festival, and made arrangements to fly in the race. (I've become hooked on hot air ballooning!). Well, from the

start, just about anything that could go wrong did. My dad came down with a virus the second day on the road, and spent the next several days just about living in bathrooms. Our 1st weekend in Aspen went pretty well. Mary Pat & Erin had flown out to spend a few days with us and to fly in the balloon race as well. The balloon festival was incredible. Floating over the Rockies with about 70 other balloons was an experience that can't be put into words. Unfortunately, things went down hill from that point on. Erin, who is 8 now, came down with a mild case of altitude sickness & a big case of boredom; No kids to play with & nothing but "grown-up" things to do! So, they ended up going home after just 3 days. The following day, I took a glider ride. I had done that the last trip to Aspen and really loved it, so I wanted to go again for a longer ride. Well, the

"thermals" weren't very good that day, so we spent most of the flight dipping & circling. Even the pilot got a bit airsick. Then, as we were coming in for a landing, a downdraft hit us & we nosed into the runway & bounced off the runway and into a ditch. Luckily, I was harnessed in real tight, so all I got was a few scrapes & bruises, plus a headache that lasted all day. The glider got banged up pretty good though. O well, any landing you can walk away from ...!

We left Aspen and headed for Estes Park. On the way, the radiator sprung a leak. Luckily, I had packed some radiator sealant, & that got us the rest of the way. When we finally got to Estes Park, there was only one radiator shop in the area, so I didn't have much of a choice about where to take the car. As soon as I got to the shop though, I knew I was in good hands - it was run by an older couple by the name of

Harold and Lil (I swear - it's true!). They use to be farmers in Nebraska, but moved to Colorado about 10 yrs ago. They were incredibly nice to me & we got to be good friends by the time the car was finished. That took 3 days, since NO one in the area had a radiator that fit the car & a new one had to be shipped from Salt Lake City. Finally, the car was done & we headed back home. The trip back was long & very hot. The Midwest was having a terrible heat wave and it hit 112° one of the days. With about 20 miles to go until home, I figured nothing else could go wrong. Just then, as we were cruising down the PA Turnpike, one of the tires blew out. Even I had to laugh over that. It seemed the appropriate end to the trip. I was actually glad to get back to work - the vacation was stressful enough! My parents & I did survive however, & are still talking to each other!

On a more positive note, not everything has been as disappointing as the trip. After all these years, Alex & I are still hanging in there together, and we've finally gotten around to doing some serious talking about our future together. He's still living in Florida, but is hoping to get a job back here in the next year or so. Once we're at least in the same state, we can do something about making things "permanent." While it's still rather premature to be thinking about wedding bells, things are looking rather promising!

Everyone here is doing well. My Mom was in the hospital for awhile because her blood pressure went crazy, but medication seems to have it under control. She even went ballooning with us in Colorado. My dad, however, opted to stay on the ground! Mary Pat and her family are doing fine. They just bought a house only a few doors away from my parents. So, one of these days, when I inherit the Sable mansion,

we'll be neighbors.

Well, I guess I'd better close, or I'll never get the rest of my cards done in time. Everyone here wishes you both a very Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year. Take care.

Love,
Karen